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SUBJECT: ON THE EVE OF THE KARZAI INAUGURAL: GERMAN VIEWS
ON U.S. PRIORITIES, DUAL-HATTING PROPOSAL, AND CONFERENCE

REF: A. STATE 118297
[1](#)B. BERLIN 1447 (NOTAL)
[1](#)C. BERLIN 1273

Classified By: DEPUTY POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR STAN OTTO. REASONS:
1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Germany completely shares U.S. priorities for the new Afghan government, and FM Westerwelle plans to reinforce these points in a scheduled bilateral meeting with Karzai after the November 19 inauguration. The German MFA remains skeptical about the idea of dual-hatting the U.S. Ambassador in Kabul as the coordinator of all international civilian assistance, preferring strongly to achieve the desired effect through a strengthening of UN efforts. The Chancellery and MFA have developed a short list of replacements for German SRAP Muetzelburg, which includes both politicians and career diplomats, but have still not come to a decision. The German MFA believes the planned international conference on Afghanistan needs to be only a day or two long and should be restricted to updating the benchmarks in Annex 1 of the 2006 Afghanistan Compact. END SUMMARY.

TOTAL AGREEMENT ON U.S. PRIORITIES FOR NEW GOVERNMENT

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Post delivered ref A points on U.S. priorities for the new Afghan government to MFA Afghanistan-Pakistan Task Force Director Ruediger Koenig on November 17 and followed up with him on November 18. Koenig emphasized that Germany "completely agreed" with the U.S. message. He confirmed that German FM Westerwelle would attend the November 19 inauguration and would have a bilateral meeting with President Karzai later that afternoon, where he planned to make these same points. Koenig said that Karzai, thanks to the U.S. Embassy's close coordination with the President, was expected to say the right things in his inaugural speech, so Westerwelle would focus on emphasizing the need to put these words into action. Koenig added, however, that the German Embassy in Kabul had reported there were credible rumors that President Obama could make a surprise appearance at the inauguration, which presumably would upset these plans for a bilateral meeting. (Comment: Koenig reassured us that the information about a possible POTUS visit had been relayed by secure means and had been restricted to just a handful of people at the MFA. End Comment.)

SKEPTICISM ABOUT DUAL-HATTING PROPOSAL

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Regarding the U.S. proposal to dual-hat the U.S. Ambassador in Kabul as the overall coordinator of international civilian assistance in Afghanistan (ref B), Koenig said bluntly that Germany had "great skepticism" that

this was feasible or even desirable. While emphasizing that the German objections had nothing to do with Amb. Eikenberry as a person, Koenig raised a number of questions: On what basis could the U.S. Ambassador credibly coordinate the efforts of the UN, EU and other actors? Who would give him his mandate? What authority would he have to carry out decisions? Wouldn't this just reinforce the perception of "Americanization" and undermine the commitment of other countries to the mission? Koenig said this coordination role more appropriately resided with the UN. While acknowledging UNAMA's weakness, Koenig argued in favor of strengthening the UN effort rather than subordinating it to a U.S. coordinator.

14. (C) Koenig suggested that one way to strengthen the UN effort was to appoint a high-powered UN Special Representative, who would stand above UNAMA and the other UN agencies in Afghanistan and would therefore not be consumed with day-to-day management issues. He noted that this was the situation when Lakhdar Brahimi was the first SRSG, with Francesc Vendrell running UNAMA. He noted that this would be equivalent to the new intermediate command arrangements for ISAF, which allows COMISAF GEN McChrystal to focus on larger strategic and political questions.

DECISION STILL PENDING ON NEW GERMAN SRAP

15. (C) Koenig said that, contrary to what MFA State Minister Werner Hoyer told SRAP Holbrooke during their November 12 meeting in Berlin, a decision will not be made on the new German SRAP before FM Westerwelle's trip to Afghanistan.

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Koenig said that a short list of candidates is under review by the Chancellery and MFA, but there is still no agreement. He declined to give any names of those under consideration, but said they included politicians, both active and retired, as well as career diplomats. He reiterated his belief that an active Bundestag member was unlikely to be chosen, given the travel demands of being the SRAP. Meanwhile, current German SRAP Muetzelburg remains on the job and will travel with Westerwelle to Kabul for the inauguration.

PRELIMINARY IDEAS ON CONFERENCE

16. (C) Koenig will also travel with the minister to Kabul and plans to stay on to have consultations with UNAMA and others about the planned international conference on Afghanistan. Koenig said it appeared that the January 28 date was firming up, with London as the venue. He thought the conference could be done on a single day, and should not be more than two days maximum. Koenig reiterated his view (ref C) that it was not necessary -- or desirable -- to re-negotiate the whole 2006 Afghanistan Compact. The only part that required updating were the benchmarks in Annex 1 of the Compact. The goal of the conference was to get commitments from the Afghan government on how it planned to carry out reforms and begin taking over responsibility from the international community; in return, the international community would indicate how it would assist in this effort. It should not be a pledging conference per se. He assumed that the conference would be conducted at the level of foreign ministers, although he acknowledged that the Chancellery might have other ideas since the conference had been a joint proposal of Chancellor Merkel, French President Sarkozy and UK PM Brown.

MURPHY